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**35-2023**

**For Immediate Release**

**June 15, 2023**

**DISTRICT ATTORNEY DARCEL D. CLARK ANNOUNCES TWO INDICTMENTS  
FOR FRAUD AGAINST ELDERLY VICTIMS;  
ON WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY, CLARK WARNS SENIORS  
TO BE VIGILANT AGAINST SCAMMERS**

**Disbarred Bronx Lawyer Allegedly Stole \$700,000 From 5 Clients in Riverdale;  
L.I. Man Allegedly Cashed \$120,000 in Checks, Nearly Depleting Woman's Account**

Bronx District Attorney Darcel D. Clark today announced that two men have been charged in separate indictments for stealing from elderly people, highlighting economic abuse of seniors who put their trust – and life savings – in the hands of fraudsters.

One indictment charges a disbarred Bronx attorney for stealing from the living and the dead—in a real estate fraud scheme and from estates that left funds to charities.

District Attorney Clark said, “The defendant allegedly ingratiated himself with mostly elderly clients in Riverdale, gaining power of attorney or becoming executor of their wills, and took profits from selling their homes or kept money that was left to charities. His alleged actions led to unsurmountable financial harm, as well as stress for people of advanced age. It is elderly abuse.”

District Attorney Clark said the defendant, Paul Friery, 69, of Shendaken, NY, who had a law office on Riverdale Avenue, is charged with second-degree Grand Larceny, third-degree Grand Larceny, fourth-degree Grand Larceny, fourth-degree Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, first-degree Scheme to Defraud, and second-degree Scheme to Defraud. Friery was arraigned June 1, 2023, before Bronx Supreme Court Justice George Villegas. The defendant was placed on supervised release and is due back in court on August 23, 2023.

According to the investigation, between July 2014 to January 2021 the defendant took thousands of dollars from victims in retainer fees to represent them in their real estate closing, and allegedly never dispersed money to clients when he received money from buyers. Friery was disbarred from the practice of law in October of 2020 following the Attorney Grievance



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Committee's investigation into predatory practices by him while acting as an attorney on behalf of multiple interested parties to various land sale contracts and probate petitions.

In one incident, Friary represented buyers of a home owned by a couple in their 90s. He allegedly gave them some \$329,000 but kept more than \$277,000. They passed away after trying for years to no avail to get the rest of the money owed to them.

In another incident, an elderly woman, whose husband predeceased her and who had no family in the U. S., hired Friary and gave him full power of attorney and made him the executor of her estate. In her will, she left \$350,000 to seven charities including the Bowery Mission, Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of New York, Food Bank for New York City, and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. In 2014 she passed away, and the charities listed confirmed that there were never any donations given by the woman's estate, Paul Friary, nor any of his companies.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Samantha Sizemore of the Economic Crimes Bureau, under the supervision of John Oxenreiter, Supervisor in the Economic Crimes Bureau, Michelle Milanes, Deputy Chief of the Economic Crimes Bureau, and Herman Wun, Chief of the Economic Crimes Bureau, and under the overall supervision of Denise Kodjo, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division, and Wanda Perez-Maldonado, Chief of the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked Trial Preparation Assistant Cindy Murillo and Principal Account Investigator Lorraine Ciechanowicz of the Economic Crimes Bureau, Senior BXDA Rackets Investigators Vincent Cantarella and Brendan Sullivan, and Detective Investigator Hugh Higgins for their work on the case.

District Attorney Clark thanked NY State Police Senior Investigator John Bode, Investigator Israel Vazquez, Investigator Blake Hasbrouch, along with Investigator Joseph Temple of Troop F.

In the second case, the defendant nearly depleted a 95-year-old woman's savings by alleged check fraud.

District Attorney Clark said, "A 95-year old woman who does not speak English entrusted her checkbook to someone. Allegedly, the checks wound up in the hands of the defendant, who



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cashied over \$120,000 worth of checks. The victim bravely testified to the grand jury. It's a cautionary tale for everyone, particularly seniors, that no one should give their account information to anyone unless they have made sure the person is trustworthy."

District Attorney Clark said Rudolf Drauch, 60, of West Babylon, NY, is charged with second-degree Grand Larceny, third-degree Grand Larceny, fourth-degree Grand Larceny, second-degree Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, third-degree Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, fourth-degree Criminal Possession of Stolen Property, first-degree Offering a False Instrument for Filing, fourth-degree Criminal Tax Fraud, and fifth-degree Criminal Tax Fraud. He was arraigned on June 13, 2023 before Bronx Supreme Court Justice George Villegas. He is due back in court on September 28, 2023.

According to the investigation, between February and August 2022, the victim, a 95-year-old Bronx woman who does not speak English, gave blank checks to someone to pay bills for her. While she was temporarily in a nursing home, the defendant allegedly cashed 72 of them totaling \$120,263. The defendant allegedly withdrew almost all the victim's savings. The victim's nephew, who grew suspicious over his aunt's finances, contacted the Bronx DA's Office in 2022 and a joint investigation with the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance uncovered the check fraud and failure to report the income on tax returns.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney John Oxenreiter of the Economic Crimes Bureau, under the supervision of Michelle Milanese, Deputy Chief of the Economic Crimes Bureau, and Herman Wun, Chief of the Economic Crimes Bureau, and under the overall supervision of Denise Kodjo, Deputy Chief of the Investigations Division, and Wanda Perez-Maldonado, Chief of the Investigations Division.

District Attorney Clark thanked BXDA Principal Account Investigator James Antonino for his assistance in the case.

District Attorney Clark thanked the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, Criminal Investigations Division, for their work in the investigation.

**An indictment is an accusatory instrument and not proof of a defendant's guilt.**

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